

FAQ for Families on DCYF Child Care Licensing Regulations

The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) is the regulatory agency for child care centers. Programs have discretion to create policies for their program that are not required by DCYF. Programs are required by regulation to provide you with a parent handbook describing their program's philosophy and policies.

If you need help finding a quality program that meets your family's needs, please visit Exceed.ri.gov or call 1-855-398-7605 for a complete search of early care and education programs in Rhode Island.

Here is a list of commonly asked questions about regulations:

What are the group size regulations for child care centers?

AGE	STAFF CHILD RATIO	MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE
6 weeks to 18 months	1 to 4	8
18 months to 3 years	1 to 6	12
3 years	1 to 9	18
4 years	1 to 10	20
5 years	1 to 12	24

Is there a regulation prohibiting that siblings or children of different ages be separated?

The mixings of age groups is allowed under the DCYF regulations but it depends on the ages of the children, infants and toddlers can be together and three, four and five year olds can be together. However, DCYF requires programs to follow the ratio requirement for the youngest child in the group.

May I provide glass bottles for my child?

DCYF approves the use of glass bottles in child care centers.

At what age can a child care center place my child on a cot to sleep?

Infants (six weeks to 12 months) may never use a cot and must be provided a full size crib. Toddlers (12 months- 3 years) may use a cot or a full size crib. Preschoolers (3 years and up) must be provided a cot.

Can my child sleep with a favorite toy or blanket?

According to DCYF regulation, no items are placed in the crib with an infant (6 weeks to 18 months) with the exception of a pacifier. However, with written parental approval, toddlers (eighteen months and older) may have one additional item placed in the crib, such as a favorite blanket, toy or stuffed animal.

Must my child remain on a cot or sleep during nap time?

Regulations require the opportunity for children to rest and or sleep. Regulations do not require that children must sleep or remain on a cot during rest time. The program is required to designate a space separate from the napping area for children who will not sleep to have quiet, supervised play.



Is my child required to go outside every day?

DCYF requires that children have the opportunity for indoor and outdoor play daily. Outdoor time may be limited if temperatures and/or weather pose a health or safety risk.

Additionally, outdoor time may not be taken away from children as a behavior consequence. Exceptions may only be made if specifically stated in a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP).

If I pack my child an unhealthy snack, is my child care provider required to take it away from them?

Meals and snacks provided by a program must meet current USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program nutritional standards (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/child-nutrition-programs>). Snacks must include fruits, vegetables and milk. If the parent provides lunches, snacks or other meals, the program must provide parents written nutrition guidelines at the time of enrollment. This is often found in the parent handbook. Programs can implement policies which prohibit parents from sending in unhealthy food, foods that may cause allergic reactions, or to only allow food prepared by the program.

Can I send my child with cloth diapers?

Yes, cloth diapers are allowed by DCYF. If cloth diapers are supplied by the parent, DCYF requires soiled cloth diapers be completely wrapped in a non-permeable material, stored in a location inaccessible to children placed in a covered container away from the children's activity and food service areas and given directly to the parent/guardian at dismissal. The diapers are not allowed to be rinsed or dumped at the child care program.

At what temperature does the state prohibit children from going outside to play?

DCYF does not regulate the temperature by which outdoor play is prohibited. Programs are expected to follow a regular daily schedule. However, planned or routine activities can be changed to meet the interests and needs of the children or to cope with weather changes or other situations that effect routines.

Does the state determine when a child can be terminated from a child care program for behavioral issues?

Each program is required to develop policies for guiding children's behavior and provide them to families and staff. When a child presents challenging behavior, staff are required to observe the child; identify events, activities, interactions and other factors that predict and may contribute to the challenging behavior; use this information to assist the child; work together with families on behalf of the child; and support families in accessing services and outside resources, when necessary. However, the final decision to terminate a child is the responsibility of the program.

If my child has special needs can a child care program refuse to enroll them?

Enrollment of a child in a child care center is a mutual decision between the child care center and the parent.

Does the State require that I show identification every time I pick up?

DCYF requires that children are only released to the parent or to an individual, eighteen years of age or older, who is authorized by the parent to pick up the child and whose identity can be verified by a proper identification card bearing his/her photograph. Additionally, a signature is required when signing a child in and out of a program.

